

provision was removed from H.R. 2357. The bill that we are debating now would no longer "establish standards of access to care for veterans seeking health care from the Department of Veterans Affairs" as is indicated by its title but instead authorizes the Secretary to hire chiropractors and makes certain Filipino World War II veterans living in the United States eligible for VA health care. I am very disappointed that this critical issue in veterans' health care access and element of the President's Task Force recommendations is not being voted on by the House today. However, I am encouraged to hear of the possibility that the Committee will hold a hearing on this very important issue when we return from the August recess. I wholeheartedly support further debate and would look forward to testifying before the Committee.

While disappointed that the appointment standards for the VA have been stripped from this bill, I am pleased that this legislation will give the Secretary of Veterans Affairs the authority to hire chiropractors. Congress has passed legislation numerous times to ensure that veterans have access to chiropractic care and I hope that this bill will clear any final hurdles that have prevented veterans from receiving this type of care.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me today in supporting this legislation that is a small, yet important, step to meeting our commitment to those Americans who made the sacrifice to serve their nation in the armed forces. As future veterans face combat in Iraq, we in Congress must live up to our pledge by providing health care to all veterans, by ensuring that it is accessible, and by fully funding the VA health care system. I urge my colleagues to join me in calling for additional legislation to meet these goals so that we may return to this floor in the near future and step closer to meeting our promise.

Mr. FILNER. Mr. Speaker, and colleagues, I rise today to urge support for H.R. 2357, legislation which includes a provision from my bill, H.R. 664, that would authorize the Department of Veterans Affairs to provide health care to Filipino World War II veterans who legally reside in the United States.

As my colleagues know, I have been working to restore these benefits for many years. By passing this legislation for Filipino World War II veterans, we are providing a giant step forward in our quest to correct the injustice that was inflicted upon them by the 1946 Congress, shortly after World War II ended.

Over 50 years ago, Filipino soldiers were drafted into service by President Franklin D. Roosevelt. They fought side-by-side with soldiers from the United States mainland, exhibiting great courage at the epic battles of Bataan and Corrigidor. Their participation was critical to the successful outcome of the war in the Far East. It was quite a shock when Congress deprived many of the benefits that they were expecting.

Because these veterans are in their 70s and 80s, their most urgent need is for health care. So I sincerely appreciate the actions of Veterans' Affairs Committee Chairman CHRIS SMITH and Ranking Member LANE EVANS, and Chairman BOB SIMMONS and Ranking Member CIRO RODRIGUEZ of the VA Health Subcommittee, as well as of VA Secretary Anthony Principi, to restore VA health care benefits to them.

This bill is also about restoring dignity and honor to these proud veterans. Over fifty years

of injustice burns in the hearts of the Filipino World War II veterans and in the hearts of their sons and daughters. This bill says that we will begin to remedy this historical injustice. We will make good on the promise of America.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 2357, the Veterans Health Care Improvement Act of 2003. This piece of legislation amends Title 38 of the United States Code, to establish standards of access to care for veterans seeking health care from the Department of Veterans Affairs. Mr. Speaker, this piece of legislation is long overdue. This legislation provides new health care benefits to Filipino veterans.

Mr. Speaker, at this time there are thousands of Filipino veterans who have proudly served this country in World War II and still, to this day, aren't eligible to receive health care benefits from Veterans Affairs. That is simply unacceptable. Under this legislation, any individual who is a veteran of the Philippine Commonwealth Army or a former New Philippine Scout living legally in the United States would be eligible for these benefits. The Congressional Budget Office estimates that by 2004, if this legislation is enacted, 9,500 Filipino veterans would qualify for these new benefits.

In addition to providing much over due health care benefits to Filipino veterans, this bill will serve to enhance the quality of chiropractic care offered by VA facilities. Currently, the VA is required to make chiropractic care available to veterans at least one site in each of VA's 21 geographic service areas, however, the bureaucracy often involved in hiring these chiropractors makes it difficult to comply. This legislation makes it easier to hire chiropractors by allowing the VA to appoint and hire the practitioners by specifying that they be treated as other medical professionals like optometrists and podiatrists. This would also allow these medical professionals to become eligible for part-time or temporary employment, educational expense reimbursements, and enhanced protection from malpractice suits.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this worthwhile legislation. It is our duty to provide our veterans with world-class health care for the countless sacrifices that they have made on behalf of our country.

Mrs. DAVIS of California. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. SIMMONS. Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support the Veterans Health Care Improvement Act of 2003.

Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. SIMMONS) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 2357, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

The title of the bill was amended so as to read: "A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to provide for the appointment of chiropractors in the Veterans Health Administration of the Department of Veterans Affairs and to

provide eligibility for Department of Veterans Affairs health care for certain Filipino World War II veterans residing in the United States."

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. SIMMONS. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and to include extraneous material on H.R. 2357, as amended.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Connecticut?

There was no objection.

□ 1530

NATIONAL CEMETERY EXPANSION ACT OF 2003

Mr. SIMMONS. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 1516) to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to establish a national cemetery for veterans in southeastern Pennsylvania, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 1516

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "National Cemetery Expansion Act of 2003".

SEC. 2. ESTABLISHMENT OF NEW NATIONAL CEMETERIES.

(a) ESTABLISHMENT.—Not later than four years after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, in accordance with chapter 24 of title 38, United States Code, shall establish five new national cemeteries. The new cemeteries shall be located in the following locations (those locations having been determined by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to be the most appropriate locations for new national cemeteries):

- (1) Southeastern Pennsylvania.*
- (2) The Birmingham, Alabama, area.*
- (3) The Jacksonville, Florida, area.*
- (4) The Bakersfield, California, area.*
- (5) The Greenville/Columbia, South Carolina, area.*

(b) FUNDS.—Amounts appropriated for the Department of Veterans Affairs for any fiscal year after fiscal year 2003 for Advance Planning shall be available for the purposes of subsection (a).

(c) SITE SELECTION PROCESS.—In determining the specific sites for the new cemeteries required by subsection (a) within the locations specified in that subsection, the Secretary shall solicit the advice and views of representatives of State and local veterans organizations and other individuals as the Secretary considers appropriate.

(d) INITIAL REPORT.—Not later than 120 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall submit to Congress a report on the establishment of the national cemeteries required by subsection (a). The report shall—

(1) set forth a schedule for the establishment of each such cemetery and an estimate of the costs associated with the establishment of each such cemetery; and

(2) identify the amount of Advance Planning Funds obligated for purposes of this section as of the submission of the report.

(e) ANNUAL REPORTS.—The Secretary shall submit to Congress an annual report on the implementation of this section until the establishment of all five cemeteries is completed and each

such cemetery has opened. The Secretary shall include in each such annual report an update of the information provided under paragraphs (1) and (2) of subsection (d).

(f) *DEFINITION OF SOUTHEASTERN PENNSYLVANIA.*—In this section, the term “southeastern Pennsylvania” means the city of Philadelphia and Berks County, Bucks County, Chester County, Delaware County, Philadelphia County, and Montgomery County in the State of Pennsylvania.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. WHITFIELD). Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. SIMMONS) and the gentlewoman from California (Mrs. DAVIS) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. SIMMONS).

Mr. SIMMONS. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, in a sense, the National Cemetery Expansion Act of 2003 is part of the legacy of the late chairman of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs, Bob Stump. It was Bob who composed many of the cemetery provisions ultimately signed into law as part of the Veterans Millennium Health Care and Benefits Act. Bob also took a particular interest in the need for improvements to our national cemeteries and to obtain an updated list of areas in the country where there was a significant unmet demand for a national cemetery. His vision of VA cemeteries as national shrines should inspire all of us and those responsible for maintaining VA cemeteries for years to come.

According to existing VA planning guidelines, VA should establish cemeteries in locations that would provide service to 90 percent of veterans within 75 miles of their homes. H.R. 1516, as amended, reflects the findings of a recently completed VA study which found the areas of the country most in need of a new national cemetery.

The study, performed by Logistic Management Institute, reviewed current and future burial needs of veterans and identified areas of the country where new national cemeteries might be constructed. They identified 31 areas with the greatest need and ranked them by the size of the population to be served. VA is expanding six cemeteries on the list currently serving veterans through land acquisitions, and State cemeteries are being planned in other areas to meet veterans' burial needs.

H.R. 1516, as amended, would direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to establish a new national cemetery, not later than 4 years after the date of enactment, in those five areas, which would be southeastern Pennsylvania; Birmingham, Alabama; Jacksonville, Florida; Bakersfield, California; and Greenville-Columbia, South Carolina. More than 900,000 veterans and their survivors will benefit from these additional national cemeteries.

H.R. 1516, as amended, would also direct the Secretary to submit a report to Congress not later than 120 days after enactment on the establishment of the national cemeteries required by this bill.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. GERLACH) and his staff for their work on this bill and for working with the gentleman from South Carolina (Chairman BROWN) and the ranking member, the gentleman from Maine (Mr. MICHAUD), to provide for the burial needs of veterans.

I would also like to recognize committee staff, Paige McManus, Darryl Kehrer, Kingston Smith, Patrick Ryan, Mary Ellen McCarthy, Geoffrey Collver, and Jim Holley for their work on the bill.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mrs. DAVIS of California. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 1516, the National Cemetery Expansion Act of 2003. I want to thank the chairman and the ranking Democrat of the full committee, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH) and the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. Evans), along with the chairman and ranking member of the Subcommittee on Benefits, the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. BROWN) and the gentleman from Maine (Mr. MICHAUD), for their good work in crafting this legislation.

I am pleased that in H.R. 1516 we are providing for the authorization and establishment of five new national cemeteries in accordance with the VA's most current burial needs assessment report. The communities of southeastern Pennsylvania; Birmingham, Alabama; Jacksonville, Florida; Bakersfield, California; and Greenville-Columbia, South Carolina, will certainly appreciate this measure.

Mr. Speaker, this is a good bill, an important bill. The veterans of this Nation deserve nothing less than an honorable and dignified final resting place.

Mr. Speaker, many brave men and women who put on the uniform to protect us during World War II and the Korean War pass from us every day at alarming rates, and it is our responsibility to provide our veterans, our brave soldiers, with dignified and honorable final resting places. I look forward to working with my colleagues and the administration to meet this serious responsibility.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all Members to support passage of this measure.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. SIMMONS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 4 minutes to the gentleman from Florida (Mr. STEARNS), a distinguished member of our committee.

(Mr. STEARNS asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. STEARNS. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, obviously I rise in support of this bill. I am especially pleased that we are going to have a national cemetery in Jacksonville, Florida. This is in northeast-central Florida, where

we have a lot of military presence, particularly with representation by three Members of Congress, myself, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. CRENSHAW), and the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. CORRINE BROWN). All three of us service Jacksonville and north-central Florida, so we are all very pleased this is being done.

We have the Mayport Naval Station with an aircraft carrier stationed there, we also have Naval Air Station and Depot up there, and we've had a huge increase in the number of retirees that are locating into our area. So we are all very pleased about this. The VA Jacksonville cemetery has been the intent of a bill I dropped, H.R. 197, and also others I have offered in prior Congresses.

As the 2,000 U.S. census shows, the revised projections forecasting a population of about 189,000 by FY 2005 in the “VA Future Burial Needs Report Sites” I think demonstrates what all of us know: our veterans are flocking to relaxed, sunny north-central Florida to retire. They deserve a resting place with dignity and beauty, and I think that this cemetery will add a lot to that promise.

Mr. Speaker, Florida has our Nation's second largest veterans population and the number one in terms of age. Nearly 325,000 veterans call home somewhere in this northeast-central Florida area, Jacksonville vicinity. Moreover, an increasing number of current active duty armed services veterans are calling Florida their home and are moving into this area. This is because nearby Alachua County, Gainesville, where we have a VA hospital, and Derval County have sent a lot of reservists and National Guardsmen to Iraq; and this whole area sent so many people to Iraq in this northeast corridor that there is going to be a lot of people that are going to retire from active duty. So this cemetery will also be important for them.

The closest VA cemetery is at least a 3-hour drive from Jacksonville, and as the subcommittee chairman mentioned the requirement is to have VA cemetery within 75 miles of the vicinity of these veterans. We need to have a VA cemetery now. So this will be going to meet this requirement.

The next closest in proximity lies in Marietta, Georgia, which is just north of Atlanta. A new national VA cemetery in Jacksonville will answer this unmet need for north Floridians and southern Georgians.

Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased. I offered this type of legislation in the 107th Congress and 106th Congress to locate a cemetery in Jacksonville, so I am grateful that we finally will pass this bill. I might add that there has been great support within the community, and they look forward to this construction.

Lastly, Mr. Speaker, you might be thinking why are a lot of people are supporting a cemetery in Florida. They may think this is a very parochial bill.

But for my colleagues from Michigan and New York, there is a high likelihood that your constituents are contemplating retiring to north-central Florida, so we welcome your veterans' and their commitment to our north Florida area. I hope all the people here in the House will support H.R. 1516.

Let us provide the dignified, hallowed grounds for our veterans. They deserve it.

Mrs. DAVIS of California. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. HOFFEL).

Mr. HOFFEL. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for yielding me time and congratulate her on her leadership on this issue.

I rise in strong support of House bill 1516, and I want to start by acknowledging the great work of our colleague, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. GERLACH). The gentleman has taken an issue that is an old issue in the Philadelphia area, trying to create new cemetery space for our veterans, and he has found a way to get this out of committee on to the floor for certain passage here today. I compliment the gentleman on it. It is important.

For the last, I guess, five terms of Congress, Members have tried to create a new cemetery in southeastern Pennsylvania. My predecessor, Congressman Jon Fox, introduced a bill in both of his two terms in Congress, with a similar bill introduced in the other body by Senator ARLEN SPECTER, that would have named the Valley Forge National Historical Park as the setting for a new veterans cemetery, a setting I still think is the perfect location. There is some controversy and resistance to that. The important thing is that we get a new cemetery in southeastern Pennsylvania.

In my first two terms, I introduced the same bill with the same support in the Senate. I lost that area in redistricting, and now the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. GERLACH) has figured out a way to add other sites to southeastern Pennsylvania and move this bill forward with full support; and I thank the Members of the committee, the ranking members and, of course, the chairs of the full committee and the subcommittee, for putting together a bill with great support.

This will create a clear and strict timetable to establish a new veterans cemetery in southeastern Pennsylvania and four other locations around the country, with sensible and responsible reporting requirements placed upon the Secretary of Veterans Affairs so that Congress can make sure that these new cemeteries actually get opened.

It is overdue, it is important legislation, and it is the right thing to do for our veterans. They have given so much to this country. It is entirely appropriate for us to make sure that all veterans who are interested in a final resting space in a national veterans cemetery have the opportunity to do it, and I know that the veterans in south-

eastern Pennsylvania will be very pleased by this progress.

I congratulate the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. GERLACH), as well as all involved.

Mr. SIMMONS. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. GERLACH), and thank him, speaking as a veteran, for all of his hard work to bring this legislation to the floor.

Mr. GERLACH. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Connecticut for yielding me time.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the gentleman from New Jersey (Chairman SMITH) and the ranking member, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. EVANS), and their staffs for their great work in bringing H.R. 1516 to the floor today, and I would also like to thank and acknowledge the kind comments of the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. HOFFEL) and his great work and support in bringing this bill to this point today. I thank the gentleman for his work, not only this year, but in previous years in this effort. Also a special thank you to our colleagues on the Pennsylvania congressional delegation for their support as well.

Most importantly, we would like to thank the veterans of southeastern Pennsylvania for their great service and sacrifice to our country over the years. This legislation was introduced last March to establish a new national veterans cemetery in southeastern Pennsylvania; and as that bill moved through the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, I am very pleased to see that some additional sites were added. As was mentioned by the gentleman from Connecticut, Birmingham, Alabama; Jacksonville, Florida; Bakersfield, California; and the Columbia-Greenville, South Carolina, area were added.

It would also require that the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs establish new and much-needed cemeteries within 4 years of the date of enactment of this legislation. Aside from establishing these important national cemeteries, another important provision of this measure will provide for local involvement in the selecting of sites for these cemeteries.

Under the legislation, the Secretary for Veterans Affairs is directed to solicit the advice and the views of representatives of local veterans organizations and other individuals as the Secretary considers appropriate.

The need for a new veterans cemetery in our community is well documented and long overdue. The Philadelphia National Cemetery is virtually closed, with the exception of cremated remains, to nearly 400,000 veterans that reside in the five counties and make up the metropolitan Philadelphia area. And while cremation may be an alternative to traditional burial for some, it is not the preference of most. But, unfortunately, it is the only option that Philadelphia-area veterans currently have if they want their remains reposed at a veterans cemetery close to home.

The only other national cemetery in our region is the Indiantown Gap National Cemetery, which is a long drive from the Philadelphia area, and can be a very difficult trip for widows, widowers, and other family members who want to visit the graves of their loved ones. I would note that more than 290,000 area veterans live over 65 miles from Indiantown Gap National Cemetery.

The Secretary for Veterans Affairs, Anthony Principi, has expressed his support for the establishment of a new cemetery in southeastern Pennsylvania after analyzing two factors not taken into account in a previous Veterans Affairs Department study.

First, the Beverly National Cemetery in nearby Burlington County, New Jersey, is filling up faster than expected and is only available to New Jersey veterans. Additionally, the Department recently added Monroe County, Pennsylvania, to the greater Philadelphia service area, thereby increasing the number of veterans in need to over 170,000, the statistical benchmark for the establishment of a new cemetery.

Secretary Principi also acknowledged that the Indiantown Gap National Cemetery in Lebanon County, Pennsylvania, is at least 80 miles from Philadelphia, which contrasts with the Department's guideline of having a veterans cemetery within 75 miles of a veteran's home.

□ 1545

Consequently, the Secretary expressed his support for a new cemetery in the greater Philadelphia area to honor those who would be laid to rest there. This legislation will provide both for its establishment within a specified time period and allow for the input of local officials and veterans in determining a specific site.

The importance of a veterans cemetery in the southeastern Pennsylvania region has been already recognized. In 1862, the 37th Congress created the National Cemetery of Philadelphia when they initially established what has become a large network of national cemeteries across the United States. Southeastern Pennsylvania veterans of today, as those of the past, should likewise have the opportunity to be buried close to home after providing the same level of heroic service and sacrifice to our Nation.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleagues, and the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. HOFFEL) in particular, and also the members of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, for their work in bringing H.R. 1516 to the floor today, and I would urge all Members of the House to support this much-needed measure.

Mrs. DAVIS of California. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. SIMMONS. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume to urge my colleagues to support the National Cemetery Expansion Act of 2003.

For a veteran, a funeral service is the last official ceremony that that veteran will participate in; and for the family, that cemetery becomes a place of remembrance and love. It is so important to these families that they be able to visit their departed veteran in this environment.

Ms. BERKLEY. Mr. Speaker, today, 9.3 million veterans are over 65. Sadly, 1,500 veterans pass away every day in the United States. The National Cemetery Expansion Act, provides more national cemeteries so that veterans' families can ensure their loved ones have a proper burial. I strongly support this legislation offered by Congressman GERLACH. In addition to providing more cemeteries, this Congress also needs to address the almost non-existent burial benefits provided by the VA.

Burial benefits have seriously eroded due to inflation; leaving states and families to make up the cost. Paying for rising burial expenses is a growing concern to families and veterans cemeteries. I have introduced a bill to increase burial benefits for veterans buried in state and national cemeteries. This bill would provide veterans families with the same percentage of burial costs as promised in 1973. I encourage this Congress to support my colleague's bill to increase the number of National Veterans Cemeteries, and to reestablish burial benefits for the families of our national heroes.

Mr. EVANS. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 1516, the National Cemetery Expansion Act of 2003.

I again want to express my appreciation to the Chairman of the full Committee, CHRIS SMITH, along with the Chairman and Ranking Member of the Benefits Subcommittee, HENRY BROWN and MICHAEL MICHAUD for their good work in crafting this legislation.

I am pleased that in H.R. 1516 we are authorizing the establishment of five new national cemeteries according to the VA's most current burial needs assessment report. We must provide a peaceful and dignified setting to honor the many men and women who bravely served this country in uniform.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, we have many other communities in great need of additional veterans' cemetery burial space. As we all know, the men and women of the "greatest generation" who served this country so grandly in World War II and Korea have reached their senior years. Well over 1,000 World War II veterans pass away each day, and this rate is projected to increase for years to come. Mr. Speaker, it is our responsibility to provide proper final resting places for our veterans. I look forward to working with my colleagues and the Administration to meet this serious responsibility.

Mr. Speaker, this measure deserves the support of all Members and I urge my colleagues to vote for its passage.

Mr. MICHAUD. Mr. Speaker, I too rise in strong support of H.R. 1516, the National Cemetery Expansion Act of 2003.

I would like to thank Chairman SMITH and Ranking Member EVANS for their leadership on the full Committee. I also want to recognize and thank HENRY BROWN, Chairman of the Benefits Subcommittee, for his good work and bipartisan efforts in working with me to craft this legislation and bring this measure to the House floor.

I am pleased that in H.R. 1516 we are authorizing the establishment of five new na-

tional cemeteries according to the VA's most current burial needs assessment report. Our veterans who served and protected us deserve nothing less than a proper final resting place.

Fortunately, the veterans in my district in Maine are not waiting for additional cemetery space thanks to a new state veterans' cemetery recently established in Caribou, ME. However, far too many communities are in need of a new veteran's cemetery. We must provide the resources to meet this need—It is our responsibility.

Mr. Speaker, this is a sound measure. I urge all Members to support its passage.

Mr. SIMMONS. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. WHITFIELD). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. SIMMONS) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 1516, as amended.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds of those present have voted in the affirmative.

Mr. SIMMONS. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. SIMMONS. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H.R. 1516, as amended.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. WHITFIELD). Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Connecticut?

There was no objection.

RECOGNIZING AND SUPPORTING THE GOALS AND IDEALS OF THE YEAR OF THE KOREAN WAR VETERAN

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 212) recognizing and supporting the goals and ideals of the Year of the Korean War Veteran, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

H. CON. RES. 212

Whereas 50 years ago, 1,800,000 Americans answered the call to defend freedom in South Korea and fought the common foe of communism with 21 allied countries under the banner of the United Nations;

Whereas the United States suffered 36,576 dead and 103,284 wounded during the Korean War in some of the most horrific conditions in the history of warfare;

Whereas the Nation's Korean War veterans did not receive the proper welcome home, thanks, or recognition for selfless service and sacrifice that had been given to veterans of previous wars;

Whereas the bravery and sacrifices of the Nation's Korean War veterans and their families and next of kin should be properly honored and recognized, and the American people wish to join in thanking and honoring Korean War veterans and their families;

Whereas it is important to include the history of the Korean War in the curricula of the Nation's schools so that future generations will learn about and appreciate the sacrifices of Korean War heroes;

Whereas the final year of the 50th Anniversary of the Korean War Commemoration should be recognized by a national effort of programs and activities to officially thank, honor, and welcome home the Nation's Korean War veterans and to officially thank and honor their families and next of kin; and

Whereas 2003 marks the final year of the United States 50th Anniversary of the Korean War Commemoration and the 50th year of the Armistice, and efforts are under way to designate 2003 as the Year of the Korean War Veteran: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate concurring), That Congress—

(1) declares to the Nation and the world that the American people will never forget the Nation's Korean War veterans or those who served the Nation on the home front during the Korean War;

(2) recognizes and supports the goals and ideals of the Year of the Korean War Veteran;

(3) requests the President to issue a proclamation calling on the people of the United States to observe the Year of the Korean War Veteran with appropriate ceremonies and activities to thank, honor, and welcome home the Nation's Korean War veterans; and

(4) urges the chief executive officers of the States, and the chief executive officers of the political subdivisions of the States, to each issue a proclamation calling upon their citizens to "Pause to Remember" the Nation's Korean War veterans and their families and next of kin with appropriate ceremonies and activities.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH) and the gentleman from California (Mrs. DAVIS) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH).

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H. Con. Res. 212, a concurrent resolution introduced by our colleague, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. SAM JOHNSON).

This resolution recognizes and supports the goals and ideals of the Year of the Korean War Veteran. This year marks the final year of the United States' 50th anniversary of the Korean War Commemoration and the 50th year of the armistice. While actual hostilities occurred from June 27, 1950, through July 7, 1953, Congress extended the war period from January 31, 1955, for veterans benefits eligibility because of the uneasy period following the end of hostilities.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to share some facts about the Korean War. Between the period of June 27, 1950, and January 31, 1955, the Korean War period, 6.8 million American men and women served in the Armed Forces of the United States. Between June 28 of